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NOTES ON THE FROSTED POOR-WILL.

Phalaenoptilus nuttalli nitidus, Brewster.

Synopsis of paper read before the Academy January 2, 1896, by D. E. LANTZ, Manhattan, Kan.

This subspecies of the Poor-will was first described by Mr. Wm. Brewster in *The Auk* for April, 1887, the type specimen having been taken on the Nueces river, Texas, February 27, 1886, by F. B. Armstrong, and the geographical range of the birds being given as Texas and Arizona. Mr. Brewster noted the occurrence of both *nuttalli* and *nitidus* in the Catilina mountains of Arizona, and suggested that possibly the two forms breed at different altitudes, or that the frosted might be only a migrant in that locality.

In *The Auk*, Vol. VI, p. 124, April, 1889, and in the Transactions of this Academy, Vol. XII, p. 24, the late Colonel Goss announced the addition of this bird to the avifauna of Kansas, his specimen having been taken at Neosho Falls, September 23, 1881. In his final work on the Birds of Kansas, Colonel Goss remarks concerning this subspecies: "This bird does not differ in habit, actions, or size from *P. nuttalli*, and I am impressed with the thought that it may possibly prove to be a dichromatic phase like that of the screech-owl rather than a subspecies as now entered." This impression was also expressed by him in *The Auk*, Vol. VII, p. 286.

A few reasons may properly be here introduced for sharing in the opinion so modestly stated by Colonel Goss. For several years I have been careful to observe the color phase of every poor-will met with in the daytime. The frosted form is easily distinguished at a distance of two or three rods. About one-fourth of all the individuals seen were frosted. While I have never seen both forms of the adult birds together as mates, I have flushed one of each from the same hill-side within a few rods of each other. My conclusion that they were mates may have been unwarranted. Unfortunately, in the three cases where Mr. Blachly found the eggs in Riley county, only a single parent bird was captured, and in each case the bird was of the frosted form. In the several cases where I have found the eggs, either both parents were of the older form, *nuttalli*, or only a single parent was seen, and it of that form.

On May 25, 1889, I found a nest in which were two young birds nearly ready to fly. They were unequally developed. The larger I should judge to have been about four days older than the other. It showed only the ordinary color phase, but the other bird showed the conspicuous white markings of *nitidus* on the wings and tail feathers, although the latter were but little developed. There was only one parent bird to be seen and it was typical *nuttalli*. All efforts to find the other parent were unsuccessful.

Both varieties of the poor-will breed in similar situations near Manhattan. They are found near together, in one case in the same nest, cared for by the same parent. There is no perceptible difference in size, habits, notes, eggs, or in any particular except coloration. Both varieties are found in Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and Kansas, while intermediate forms are reported from southern California. The Death Valley exploring expedition in 1891, found no specimens of *nitidus*; but *nuttalli* was quite common. Further investigation is necessary to establish the fact of dichromatism in the poor-will; but the observations of the writer thus far made strongly support the theory.